



California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Los Angeles Region



Terry Tamminen
Secretary for
Environmental
Protection

Over 50 Years Serving Coastal Los Angeles and Ventura Counties
Recipient of the 2001 *Environmental Leadership Award* from Keep California Beautiful

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

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To: Interested Persons

From: Renee DeShazo
Staff Environmental Scientist, Regional Programs

Date: August 12, 2004

Re: Public Notice of Tentative Resolution to Clarify Existing Authority to Regulate Hydromodifications within the Los Angeles Region, and Articulate the Intent to Develop a Regional Policy on Hydromodification of Streams in the Los Angeles Region

At the September 2, 2004 regular meeting, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (Regional Board) will consider a tentative resolution to clarify existing authority to regulate hydromodifications within the Los Angeles Region and outline future steps to develop a regional policy on hydromodification of streams in the Los Angeles Region. The Regional Board will take action on the tentative resolution after hearing staff's presentation and public comments. The tentative resolution is enclosed. Please contact Renee DeShazo at (213) 576-6783 or Melinda Becker at (213) 576-6681 if you have any questions.

Public Hearing
September 2, 2004 at 9:00 a.m.
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Board Room
700 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, California

Written comments and exhibits must be submitted to the Regional Board no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 23, 2004. Failure to comply with these requirements is grounds for the Board to refuse to admit the proposed written comment or exhibit into evidence (California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 649.4).

Comments should be submitted to:

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Los Angeles Region
320 W. 4th Street
Los Angeles, California 90013

ATTN: Deborah Neiter

All exhibits including charts, graphs and other testimony presented at the public hearing must be left with the Regional Board for inclusion in the Administrative Record. Please note that the Regional Board may impose time limits on oral testimony at the public hearing.

California Environmental Protection Agency

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For a list of simple ways to reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see the tips at: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/news/echallenge.html>



Our mission is to preserve and enhance the quality of California's water resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

Background

The Regional Board holds as one of its highest priorities to preserve the Region's remaining natural water courses and to restore, to the extent feasible, the highly modified urban rivers in the Los Angeles Region. Protecting the physical and biological integrity of water bodies within the Los Angeles Region consistent with the federal Clean Water Act and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act) requires careful consideration of projects that alter natural stream flow or stream channels. The alteration of stream flow or the beds and banks of rivers, streams, and creeks, including ephemeral washes, is generally referred to as a hydromodification.

The tentative resolution being considered by the Regional Board is intended to clarify the existing authority of the Board to regulate hydromodifications within the Los Angeles Region. Further, this resolution is intended to outline future steps including without limitation Basin Plan amendments to strengthen the Board's ability to protect the physical and biological integrity of the Region's water bodies.

Human civilization has attempted to alter the environment through hydromodifications for centuries. In recent history, these hydromodifications were made in order to maximize the developable land area for housing and other urban development. Urbanization, and the corresponding increase in impervious area within the watershed and decrease in the width of natural floodplains, often results in significantly altered patterns of surface runoff and infiltration and, consequently, stream flow. This, in turn, necessitates further in-stream hydromodification in order to stabilize banks and constrain the stream to the channel to prevent flooding. The sequence of events is discussed extensively in the Basin Plan and in the Regional Board's municipal storm water permit for Los Angeles County. Both of these documents are available on the Regional Board web site at www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb4/.

Many hydromodifications, which are undertaken with laudable goals, have later been shown to de-stabilize and enlarge stream channels as well as degrade habitat and reduce species abundance and diversity. As a result, it is important that hydromodifications be carefully considered to ensure that the immediate improvements sought are designed in such a way as to avoid unintended adverse consequence on the biological community and the character of the receiving water both in the vicinity and downstream of the hydromodification.

This tentative resolution provides the Regional Board with the opportunity to emphasize the value of the Region's natural water bodies; the multiple benefits they provide including high quality habitat, recreational opportunities and groundwater recharge; and the importance of preserving our natural water courses. The resolution represents one step toward strengthening the Regional Board's ability to scrutinize and regulate hydromodifications to ensure that potential impacts are avoided whenever possible or otherwise minimized and mitigated. The Regional Board has initiated other steps by requiring local stormwater management agencies to evaluate peak flow controls and determine numeric criteria to prevent and minimize erosion of natural channels and banks caused by urbanization, and to protect stream habitat.

Regional Board staff invites comment on the tentative resolution and looks forward to working together to protect and restore the Region's water bodies.

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